

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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P 021030Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5883

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0011

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, US

SUBJECT: CALL ON LAO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

NOUPHANH SITHPHASAY

SUMMARY. IN COURSE OF MY COURTESY CALL SECRETARY OF STATE NOUPHANH SITHPASAY WHO IS AN AUTHORITATIVE AND SELF-CONFIDENT LAO COMMUNIST MADE THREE INTERESTING POINTS. HE SAID THE LAO COMMUNIST REGIME WANTED TO MAINTAIN NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND EVEN TO IMPROVE THEM. IT REGARDED UNITED STATES CONTRIBUTION TO "HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR" AS AN INDISPENSABLE CONDITION TO ANY IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS. IT DID NOT WANT TO BECOME ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT EXCLUSIVELY "ON ONE SIDE" NOR DID IT WANT " COMPLETELY TO ATTACH ITSELF TO ONE SIDE." THIS MEETING WAS INTERESTING BECAUSE IT PRODUCED THE FIRST DIRECT REITERATION OF THE LAO COMMUNIST DESIRE FOR U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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AID, THE FIRST -- SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN AUGUST 1975 --

FORMULATION OF SUCH AID AS A REQUIREMENT FOR "IMPROVEMENT" OF RELATIONS AND THE FIRST EVER-- TO MY KNOWLEDGE -- EXPLICIT STATEMENT THAT THE LAO COMMUNISTS ENVISAGED OTHER THAN TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, SOVIET AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS. THE GOOD FAITH IN WHICH THIS LAST STATEMENT WAS MADE REMAINS TO BE DETERMINED, BUT THE FACT IT WAS MADE EXPLICITLY TO THE UNITED STATES CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IS INTERESTING AND WORTHY OF FURTHER ANALYSIS. END SUMMARY.

1. JANUARY 2 I PAID COURTESY CALL ON SECRETARY OF STATE NOUPHANH SITHPHASAY WHOM I HAD ALREADY MET EARLIER ON TWO MORE OR LESS PUBLIC OCCASIONS. I TOLD HIM WE DESIRED TO MAINTAIN NORMAL RELATIONS WITH LAOS AND RECALLED THAT THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HAD IMMEDIATELY RESPONDED TO NEWS OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF LAOS BY STATING THAT DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND LAOS CONTINUED. I ADDED THAT I HAD ALSO REPLIED IN THE SAME SENSE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND THAT I HAD BEEN TRYING SINCE MY ARRIVAL TO HAVE THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

2. NOUPHANH REPLIED THAT THE PDRL HAD NOTED THE SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT AT THE TIME AND ALSO WANTED TO MAINTAIN NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND EVEN TO IMPROVE THEM BUT THAT AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO "BINDING UP THE WOUNDS OF WAR" WAS AN "INDISPENSABLE CONDITION" TO ANY IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. HE SAID THE UNITED STATES WAS BOUND BY THE VIENTIANE ACCORDS AND BY THE PARIS ACCORDS TO MAKE SUCH A CONTRIBUTION. I TOLD HIM THAT FRANKNESS REQUIRED ME TO EXPLAIN TO HIM AS I HAD TO VARIOUS MINISTERS OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT (PGNU) THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD NOT BEEN A PARTY TO THE VIENTIANE ACCORDS AND THAT A GREAT MANY THINGS HAD HAPPENED SUBSEQUENT TO THE PARIS ACCORDS INCLUDING THE MASSIVE NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY ADVANCES INTO SOUTH VIETNAM. WE WENT ROUND AND ROUND ON THIS FOR A WHILE AND NOUPHANH ENDED BY SAYING THAT ANYWAY THE UNITED

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STATES HAD AN OBLIGATION TO BIND UP THE WOUNDS OF WAR. HE REMARKED IN THE COURSE OF THIS PHASE OF THE DISCUSSION THAT THE LAO WERE A PEOPLE WHO DID NOT CHERISH HATREDS. I READ HIM THE EXTRACT FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DECEMBER 7 EAST-WEST CENTER REMARKS ON INDOCHINA.

3. NOUPHANH THEN COMPLAINED THAT THE UNITED STATES

HAD TERMINATED THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IT HAD FORMERLY GIVEN LAOS. I REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF THE LAO REQUEST FOR RADICAL REVISION OR ANNULMENT OF THE 1951 BILATERAL AID AGREEMENT AND FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. PERSONNEL, AID AND MILITARY, WORKING ON ASSISTANCE MATTERS AND POINTED OUT, AS I HAD TO HIS PREDECESSORS IN THE PGNU, THAT WITH THE DEPARTURE OF THESE PEOPLE CONTRIBUTION OF AID UNDER THE OLD ARRANGEMENTS BECAME IMPOSSIBLE. NOUPHANH REITERATED THAT A U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO "HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR" WAS AN INDISPENSABLE CONDITION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS.

4. NOUPHANH NEXT SAID HE WAS GLAD THE THAI HAD DECIDED TO REOPEN THE LAND BORDER BECAUSE CLOSURE OF THE BORDER HAD BEEN DRIVING THE LAO TOWARDS "ATTACHING THEMSELVES TO ONE SIDE" AND THEY DID NOT WANT TO DO THIS. THEY WANTED THEIR ECONOMY TO HAVE OPENINGS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, TO THAILAND AND TO "THE OTHER SIDE." HE CONFIRMED THAT THE LAND BORDER WAS IN FACT OPEN, SAID THIS WAS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH THE LAO AND THE THAI PEOPLES AND REMARKED "THE THAI SHOULD NOT FORCE US TO THE OTHER SIDE."

5. COMMENT: APART FROM FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUNE SIPRASEUTH, NOUPHANH IS THE MOST AUTHORITATIVE AND SELF-CONFIDENT PERSON I HAVE MET IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. HE HAS MORE MATURITY AND FINESSE THAN COMMUNIST CADRE SOUBANH SRITHIRATH AND IS MORE ARTICULATE THAN PHOUNE. I CAN MAKE NO JUDGEMENT AS TO HIS PERSONAL CREDIBILITY AT THIS EARLY STAGE BUT HE IS CLEARLY SOMEONE TO BE RECKONED WITH IN THE NEW SYSTEM. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THIS CONVERSATION WERE:

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A. CONFIRMATION THAT THE PDRL EXPECTS A U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE CONTRIBUTION OF SOME SORT TO "HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR."

B. DESCRIPTION OF SUCH A CONTRIBUTION AS AN "INDISPENSABLE CONDITION" NOT TO "CONTINUED RELATIONS" BUT TO "IMPROVED RELATIONS."

C. EXPLICIT STATEMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME TO THIS EMBASSY THAT THE PDRL DOES NOT WANT "COMPLETELY TO ATTACH ITSELF TO ONE SIDE" (I.E., NORTH VIETNAM, USSR, CHINA). I CANNOT AT THIS TIME HONESTLY COMMENT ON THE BONA FIDES OF THIS STATEMENT, BUT OBVIOUSLY IT IS INTERESTING IF ONLY BECAUSE IT WAS MADE AND MERITS FURTHER ANALYSIS.

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